



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

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October 7, 1988

Note to Elaine Orr, NAPA

Attached is a copy of the latest open assignments message sent to all Foreign Service Officers up for reassignment in the coming summer cycle.

Compared to earlier versions, there is a greater emphasis on "service need," but whether this works to the advantage of bureaus like INR remains to be seen.

One procedural positive step taken is that bureaus such as INR with "hard to fill" positions (3 or less bidders at grade, in cone) will have two opportunities to "lock in" bidders once the assignments cycle gets under way in December. The first opportunity will occur at the first panel in December; the second, sometime in March. What this means is that we will generally not have to compete with other bureaus to assign these people. The exceptions mainly consist of equivalent positions overseas (always a preference) or equivalent positions in other functional bureaus.

All this may help, but, as pointed out in our other memoranda and discussions, the fact remains that the Department has no policy per se about the assignment of FSOs to the intelligence function and no career development policy directed towards improving/enlarging the cadre of FSOs involved in intelligence. Given the importance of intelligence in the foreign affairs process of the USG, one can seriously question whether this is a useful approach from many perspectives, including the institutional interests of the Department of State.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be "JMS".

United States Department of State

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Department Notice

ALL FOREIGN SERVICE PERSONNEL

September 18, 1988 PER

OPEN ASSIGNMENTS - THE 1989 CYCLE

Since its introduction in 1978 the Department has endeavored to improve and refine the Open Assignments process with each cycle. As the needs of the Service have changed so has the assignment process been modified to meet those needs. We have simplified the recording and matching of bids with jobs and improved the alignment of Service need with employees' abilities and preferences. Our commitment to equity and discipline in the entire assignment process remains constant.

Foreign Service employees eligible for transfer in 1989 or 1990 should read this message carefully. It describes the Open Assignments policy and procedures and explains how the process operates. Moreover, it tells you what you must do.

- Part I describes open assignment procedures.
- Part II addresses training needs and opportunities.
- Part III provides instructions on special requirements and procedures.

Critical budget concerns and reduced personnel staffing continue to place constraints on Department operations. Nonetheless we are building on the accomplishments of the past decade in making the Open Assignments system responsive to Service needs, professional development, and specialized training of employees. We will continue a restrictive policy on stretches and language waivers as we have done in previous cycles. Your bid lists, therefore, should be carefully composed and contain only those jobs you would truly be interested in filling and which you have reasonable prospects of obtaining.

Management will continue to maintain its emphasis on Service need and discipline, seeking to mesh your bids with that

concept. While we will take your bid preferences seriously, you may be assigned to any position on which you bid without further consultation. (Urgent Service need may even require us to assign Foreign Service employees to positions not bid. We hope that step will be necessary only in rare and unusual cases.) Moreover, employees who refuse to bid or who bid unrealistically increase the risk of their being assigned to positions or posts they do not desire. Additionally, we will maintain emphasis on implementing the Fair Share policy so that all Foreign Service members take their share of hardship assignments. During the 1988 assignment cycle a Management Council decision on the domestic hard-to-fill exercise was implemented to cover domestic positions primarily in the functional bureaus in addition to overseas jobs. (See page 8 for list of key incentives in this program.) Finally, as we have done for the past two assignment cycles, we will automatically notify posts by telegram sometime in November of the number of in-cone and at-grade bidders for each job (except secretaries and communicators) to add a crucial element of reality to your preferences. (A cable will also be forwarded from the Director General describing more fully the steps taken by PER in the assignment process and certain structuring of the process by PER to achieve the goals outlined in this message.)

PART I: Open Assignments Policy and Procedures

The overall objective of the assignment process is to assign qualified personnel to each position in reasonable anticipation of the vacancy and in a manner as responsive as possible to the employee's career development and professional aspirations. While we seek to provide career enhancing opportunities and to take individual preferences into account in making assignments, should a mutually agreeable assignment not be possible, the Department ultimately will determine where your skills and qualifications are most needed in a system of increasing restraints on our personnel resources.

The Open Assignments system is designed to engage all Foreign Service members directly in the assignment process -- by providing information on all position vacancies and an opportunity for all eligible bidders to compete openly for them. The specific elements of the system include:

A. THE ASSIGNMENT CYCLE

Secretarial and CPO/SCO Assignments: (see pages 15 and 16)

Officer Assignments:

-- The officer assignment cycle commences on November 1, for all vacancies (including long-term training and details) occurring from June 1 through October 31, 1989.

-- All officers eligible for transfer from June 1 through September 30, 1989, must submit their bid lists by November 1, 1988.

-- Assignments to June-October 1989 (and summer 1990 and 1991 hard-language-designated) vacancies begin in December 1988.

-- Officers eligible for transfer in 1990 or 1991 who are qualified in hard languages (languages requiring 44 weeks of study for S3/R3 proficiency) and non-world languages (languages other than French, German, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish) should review the 1988 cycle vacancy list for language designated positions (LDPs) coming open in their year of transfer eligibility. LDPs in languages requiring 44 weeks' study for S-3/R-3 proficiency are listed one year in advance of normal vacancies; those requiring two years' study (i.e., Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean) are advertised two years in advance. Language-qualified officers eligible for transfer in 1990 and 1991, respectively, can and should bid by November 1, 1988, if they are interested in these hard-language-designated positions. (Officers wishing hard language training in connection with 1990 or 1991 LDP vacancies should see Part II page 14 for further information.) As a departure from normal practice, assignments to hard and non-world LDPs may be made prior to nine months before the month in which the vacancy occurs. This is designed to facilitate assignments to LDPs for which there is a limited number of language-qualified officers.

-- Requests for an extension should be submitted at least 12 months prior to the officer's TED and must have post/Bureau concurrence. Incumbents of hard-language and non-world language designated positions, however, should submit extension requests by November 1, 1988 if their positions are subject to assignment in the 1989 cycle (i.e. your TED is 1990 or 1991 and your replacement would be assigned to language training beginning in August 1989.) For Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Arabic-designated positions requiring two years' language training (i.e., LDP's at the 3/3 level), tours of duty are generally fixed ahead of time. All extension requests should be consistent with the tour of duty policy for the post of assignment.

-- Requests for curtailment (which must also be justified and have post/Bureau concurrence) should be received in PER so that the proposed new TED would fall at least nine months after the curtailment request is received - e.g., an officer with a June 1990 TED who proposes to curtail to June 1989 should submit the curtailment request not later than September 1988. Minor changes in TOD from one to three months may be granted whenever PER concludes that compassionate considerations and/or Service need make such adjustments desirable.

-- Off Cycle Bidders: Officers with TEDs from October 1989 through May 1990 inclusive will be contacted by their career counselors in February 1989. All off-cycle vacancies are listed in the off-cycle update cables sent to the field in February and updated periodically thereafter. Those officers should submit bids by March 31, 1989. Officers wishing to request bridge assignments or a revised TED should recognize that changes in assignments which result in double staffing or long vacancies will not be made.

-- Off-cycle officers whose TEDs would allow them the time to take 24-week non-world language courses may bid (preferably by November 1) on the language-designated positions opening in the summer of 1990 (with February 1990 language starts) listed in the 1989 cycle open assignments messages. For example, an officer whose TED is between 11/89 and 1/90 may bid on a 7/90 vacancy in Copenhagen that requires language training beginning in 2/90. Off-cycle officers are encouraged to review the 1989 cycle bid packet and subsequent open assignments messages with this in mind.

Additionally, off-cycle bidders should review PART II Training and the separate messages to follow providing information on detail assignments under the Pearson and other programs.

B. VACANCY INFORMATION

-- Career Development Officers (CDO's) will send list of scheduled vacancies to employees.

-- Separate messages will provide information on (1) long-term training opportunities for officers, and (2) detail assignments to other Departments and Agencies, State and local Governments under the Special Domestic Assignments Program (Pearson) and other programs.

-- After November 1 PER/FCA will periodically provide updated vacancy lists.

C. SELECTION CRITERIA

-- Bids on vacancies for which employees do not meet the position requirements in terms of the following criteria will be eliminated from further consideration:

- Transfer Eligibility Date (TED)
- Language Competence (as outlined on page 14)
- Rank (no more than two grades above or below the position level) - see page 21 (Section D, on the following page)
- Functional Skills (See page 5)

-- Panels will base assignment decisions on the criteria listed above as well as the following additional factors as appropriate:

- service need;
- stated preferences of the employee;
- preferences of the receiving Bureau;
- employee career development and professional aspirations; and
- a fair proportion of service at hardship posts.

D. BIDDING FORMAT AND PROCEDURES

-- If you are due for reassignment in 1989, you must submit a list of at least six but no more than fifteen bids on advertised positions in the periodic assignment vacancy list or cables. These must be grouped by preference, as "High," "Medium" or "Low." (Additionally, if you wish, you may rank-order within each group in your narrative comments.) You should concentrate bids on positions at your personal grade with no more than half your bids on positions above or below your grade level. With few exceptions, qualified candidates of the appropriate grade are given preference in assignment actions. FO-3 positions are considered at grade for tenured FO-4 employees. All senior and junior officer (04 and 05) positions are considered at grade for senior and untenured junior officers respectively.

-- Your bid list must be submitted in the format shown on page 24, by cable or in writing, to your CDO in PER/FCA. Telephone bids are not accepted; bids not in the proper format will not be recorded.

-- Bid messages which do not conform to these requirements including statement of bid preferences, will not be considered. Employees will be asked to submit a revised bid cable.

-- Bids must include positions in more than one bureau or geographic area. On your initial bid list, you should not submit more than 60 percent of your bids in one bureau or geographic area. If you are assigned to the Department and will have at least two more years remaining to serve in a maximum five-year tour in Washington, you may bid only on Washington jobs, if you desire. If you are serving overseas and seek a Washington assignment -- and you are not a fair share candidate -- you may bid only on Washington assignments. Fair share candidates who are overseas are not precluded from including Washington assignments in their bid list. They should indicate in the narrative portion of their bid cable any specific career or personal factors affecting their Washington assignment preferences. Such considerations are weighed in assignment decisions.

-- Every employee is expected to serve a "fair share" of assignments in hardship posts during his/her career. Service at hardship posts (or lack thereof) continues to be a significant criterion in the assignment process. You are therefore strongly encouraged to include differential posts among your bids.

-- Employees should be aware that under the following conditions they become prime candidates for assignments to appropriate positions at hardship posts through the identification process described below (Section E). These conditions are: (1) if you are a "fair share" candidate, that is, one who has not served a tour of duty at a differential post within the last eight years, and (2) you do not maintain at least two in-cone or interfunctional and at-grade bids on differential posts. Bids on the following 10% differential posts will not exempt "fair share" employees from the identification pool of candidates:

Bangkok
Brasilia
Gaborone
Harare
Istanbul

Kuala Lumpur
Port Louis
Santiago
Santo Domingo

If you have served at a differential post (including any of the above listed posts) in the last eight years, that service will be counted as hardship service. Fair share candidates with limited medical clearances are not exempt from including differential posts among their bids. The Bureau of Personnel in consultation with the Office of Medical Services ultimately will determine the advisability of assigning an employee with a limited medical clearance to a hardship post. (See Medical Examinations on page 18.)

Hardship differentials, along with most other allowances, are included in the "bidding tool" which may be found in the post personnel/administrative offices and bureau executive offices.

-- Domestic hard-to-fill: During the 1988 assignment cycle, Personnel implemented a domestic hard-to-fill (DHTF) exercise to assist all bureaus other than the regional bureaus in filling underbid positions. A DHTF position is one receiving less than three bids at grade and in cone after the initial bids are received by November 1. You will be able to identify DHTF positions by an asterisk when we issue the November message on the competition of bidders for positions. You may submit revised or supplemental bids as stated below. The key incentives in the program are: (1) favorable consideration for a one-year waiver of the Five Year rule for employees wishing to spend a sixth year (or a two year tour involving a fifth and sixth year) in one of these positions in the Department and (2) a more liberal approach towards early stretches to fill these vacancies. In addition, officers are reminded that service in a functional bureau can be a factor for multifunctional promotion consideration. You should contact your CDO for further information.

-- Training and Details should be included, as appropriate.

-- Bid lists may include an extension request. However, if you have waited until your bid list is due to request an extension, i.e. failed to submit an extension request 12 months prior to your TED in accordance with Part I-A above, you must bid your own position and compete with other candidates. You must also submit the requisite number of other bids. Extensions at non-differential posts normally may not exceed 12 months.

-- Supplemental bids are welcome and will be given full consideration, if you have not already been assigned.

-- The final paragraph of your bid message should spell out those factors particularly important in your next assignment, e.g., type of work, level of responsibility, geographic area. If you bid any language designated position and have not been tested in that language in the past five years you should include a self-assessment of your current proficiency and the amount of training you believe will be needed to reach the required level. You should also include any personal circumstances which could affect the assignment, e.g., medical limitations, special educational needs. Finally, you should outline the reasons for your assignment and/or training preferences, specifically any special qualifications for these positions.

-- If you are part of a tandem couple a special line should be included in the automated portion of your bid telegram immediately after your last bid line and before the stop line. (See sample format in Part IV of this message.) This information will be used to assist in the assignment process and to automatically update the personnel data base. In addition to the above information tandem members should continue, as in the past, to include a final narrative paragraph providing further information to assist in the assignments process. Each member should indicate his/her spouse's employing agency, skill code, present post of assignment (or if on LWOP), transfer eligibility date, and name of spouse's career counselor. Tandem members who wish to be assigned together are requested to submit coordinated bid lists. Members of tandems have the option of indicating which member's assignment should take precedence. If

one tandem member is untenured, that assignment will automatically take precedence because of the need to ensure that employee has maximum opportunity to gain tenure in the Foreign Service. For more complete information on this subject, see 87 State 251964 or the Department Notice of August 14, 1987, on the Department's policy on assignment of tandem couples. To assist tandems and others, an additional vacancy list by post will be provided.

-- You may request your CDO to delete previously submitted bid(s) if deletion of the bid(s) does not reduce the total number and type of bids submitted to less than the minimum number and distribution required. Requests must be submitted in writing to your CDO, either by cable or memorandum. The CDO will delete your bid(s) as requested unless you are under active consideration for the position on which you had previously bid. The CDO will notify you if the bid deletion request cannot be honored.

-- If no bids are received, PER will assume (after confirming that no bids were sent) that you have no onward assignment preferences, and PER will assign you according to Service need.

E. ASSIGNMENT PROCEDURES

General:

-- You may be assigned to any position on your bid list without further consultation.

-- Service need is one of the principal criteria in the assignments process. It may thus be necessary occasionally to assign eligible qualified personnel who have not expressed interest in particular positions.

-- While assignments to positions above and below an employee's grade will continue to be made, a qualified candidate of the appropriate grade will normally be given preference.

-- All of your bids will be given full consideration provided they meet the selection criteria in Section C above. If none of the bids looks possible, your CDO will promptly suggest positions in line with your skills, rank, qualifications, and, to the maximum extent possible, expressed general preferences. You will be notified if the Department's need for timely staffing is likely to result in your being considered for assignment to a specific position on the vacancy list.

Once the assignment panel determines that service need or burden-sharing of service at differential posts requires that you be considered for identification for a position on which you have not bid, your CDO will notify you of the proposed identification for a specific position on the vacancy list. At this point, you may exercise your right of appeal within ten working days, from the acknowledged date of receipt. In appealing the identification, you must provide your CDO telegraphically or by memorandum with a response to the identification, including if desired, the submission of additional alternative bids. The assignments panel will then consider the appeal. If the panel decides the identification should stand, the assignment will be made and the CDO will notify you of that action. If the employee so desires, he or she may then appeal the assignment to the Director General. This final appeal must be made within ten working days from the acknowledged date of receipt of formal notification.

Should an employee refuse to accept assignment upon conclusion of this process, appropriate disciplinary action will be pursued. (See 3 FAM and Section 610 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980.)

Part II - Training

-- The Senior Seminar. The Senior Seminar is given annually to some of the most promising senior officers from the Department of State and other agencies. It is the Department's leading and most prestigious Foreign Affairs training course for those in federal service who have already attained senior rank and who can later be

expected to serve in increasingly responsible positions within their agency. The Department sends approximately 10 to 12 senior officers each year to participate. They are selected by the Senior Seminar Selection Committee (consisting of a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Personnel, another Deputy Assistant Secretary of State from outside the Bureau of Personnel, the Director of the Office of Foreign Service Career Development and Assignments, the Dean of the Senior Seminar and the Chief of the Senior Officer Division in PER) on the basis of demonstrated outstanding performance and potential. The majority of the participants are chosen from the group of newly promoted FE-OC officers. There is also one seminar space for an SES employee and one for an FS-01.

Officers selected are assigned automatically to the first seminar that follows their transfer eligibility date: they therefore need not submit bids for admission to the seminar. Officers are ineligible for the seminar if they have had senior training within the previous three years or face mandatory retirement less than four years after the end of the course.

-- Senior Training. All FO-01 officers who are due for reassignment in 1989 for the first time since their promotion to FO-01, who are not subject to involuntary separation because of time-in-class for at least three years following the completion of training, and who are not constrained by the "5-year rule" limitation on Washington assignments will automatically be considered for senior training. FO-01 officers who have been reassigned since their promotion to their present grade will be considered if they indicate their interest by means of a bid on senior training, if they have not been assigned to senior training previously and if they meet the involuntary separation (to include separation because

of the 6-year window provision) and the "5-year rule" criteria outlined above. Please note that officers who have been reassigned since promotion to FO-01 must bid on senior training if they wish to be considered (detailed instructions are contained in the long-term training message). Senior training bids should be in addition to the minimum of six preferences required by the bidding procedures. The Department makes every effort to select only its most competitive officers for senior training and expects that the officers so chosen will accept their invitations to participate. Officers chosen to participate in senior training will be excused only for compelling personal or Service-need considerations.

--- Long-term Training. Employees who intend to bid on long-term training should read carefully the long-term training announcement (which will follow shortly). A separate training application is no longer required. Organization code numbers have been increased to allow more specificity in bidding. Bidders on university training should submit copies of their university transcripts to PER/FCA/TL, Room 2807 N.S. The Department makes a special effort to ensure that assignments following training are directly relevant to that training. In the case of some Mid-Level university training and specialized Senior Training designated for ongoing linked assignments, we will continue the policy of making the training assignment and the onward posting at the same time. Officers are reminded that time-in-class waivers have been instituted for officers selected to study hard languages (44 weeks or more) and University Economic Training (UET); i.e., 20-year TIC's and six-year windows will be extended for students of these subjects to cover the length of the training. Senior officers may also benefit from TIC waivers if selected for hard language study.

-- Mid-Level Training. Section 703 (C) of the Foreign Service Act of 1980 states that officers should complete mid-career training before appointment to the Senior Foreign Service. A schedule of mid-level continuum (MLC) courses has now been established. The MLC is composed of two parts: (1) the tradecraft courses in each function as well as on Washington service, and (2) the functional intensive courses deepening background in the conal specialties. Officers tenured after July 1, 1982, who did not complete the Mid-Level Course earlier, will be assigned to MLC courses as appropriate en route to their next assignment.

-- Language Training. Language training requirements should also be noted carefully. If the position you have in mind is language-designated you must have enough time for the requisite training unless you already have the language at the required level of proficiency, as shown by an FSI test within the last five years. If long-term language training is needed, for example, you should look a year ahead at those positions requiring 44 weeks of training. If you are interested in one of these positions and you already have the language, be sure your CDO knows of your interest early enough, i.e., by November 1, 1988 for vacancies occurring June-September 1990. Officers should look an additional year in advance for positions requiring two years' language study. The level of language proficiency required for the job is shown on the vacancy list you will receive from your CDO or on the Staffing Pattern.

The Language-Preferred Position (LPP) program, under which certain positions (many of them secretarial or communications) not formally listed as LDPs, or designated as requiring some degree of language proficiency, will be continued and expanded. No specific proficiency level is assigned to LPPs, but they

normally will be filled by personnel with speaking and reading ability equal to that generally achieved through the FSI "FAST" language courses. LPP vacancies will be indicated on vacancy lists by the appropriate two-letter LP language code. Personnel assigned to these positions who do not already have the requisite language proficiency will be provided the appropriate training, in most cases through the FSI "FAST" courses.

The Department provides language training for all employees and adult dependents to the extent resources permit, and schedules FSI "FAST" courses where longer training periods are not required or feasible. Secretaries, communicators and other personnel are encouraged to consult FSI's course catalog which describes the language and area courses offered at FSI, and should indicate interest in "FAST" training when submitting bids on positions which are neither LDPs nor LPPs. When funds and space permit, dependents in Washington will also be able to take language training at FSI. If your spouse and/or dependents 18 years of age or older wish to receive training, you should advise PER/FCA of their names and social security numbers.

Part III: Special Instructions

-- Security Officers. Open assignments procedures apply to security officers. They should submit their bids and training requests in accordance with Section (D) (Bidding Format and Procedure). On-cycle officer bids are due by November 1, 1988. Off-cycle officer bids are due by March 31, 1989. All requests for extension should be submitted at least 12 months prior to the employee's TED and should have the concurrence of the post or bureau of assignment. Curtailment requests should also be submitted within the timetable described in Part I Section A.

-- Secretaries. Secretarial assignments are made in quarterly cycles. The cycles are (1) January through March, (2) April through June, (3) July through September, and (4) October through December. Bids from secretaries with TED's within a cycle will be reviewed as

a group. Therefore secretaries are requested to submit their bids nine months before their TED. "Preference Letters" are sent from secretarial CDO's to secretaries twice a year in a timely manner based on transfer eligibility date of the employee. Secretaries are urged to read this letter, entitled "The Panel and You," before submitting their bid lists. Secretaries must submit bids as outlined in paragraph D above. All requests for extension should be submitted at least 12 months prior to the employee's TED and should have post/Bureau concurrence. Curtailment requests should also be submitted within the timetable described under Part I, Section A.

Secretaries may bid on Ambassadorial secretary positions without regard to their TEDs. All bids on AMB/SEC positions will be considered, and secretaries selected for these positions will be expected to transfer to the position at a time agreed upon between the secretary and Ambassador.

Secretaries should bid only on positions listed on the secretarial open assignments cables, which are sent to all posts and Bureaus on a bi-weekly basis.

It should be emphasized that except for the specific comments made above, all other provisions of the Department's Open Assignments procedures pertain to secretaries and should be reviewed carefully.

-- CPO/SCO Employees. CPO/SCO assignments are also now made in quarterly cycles. The cycles are (1) January through March, (2) April through June, (3) July through September, and (4) October through December. Bids from communicators with TED's within a cycle will be reviewed as a group. Bids should be submitted nine months prior to one's TED. Bids must be submitted as outlined in Section (D) (Bidding Format and Procedures) above. All requests for extension should be submitted at least twelve months prior to the employee's TED and should have post/Bureau concurrence.

Requests for curtailment should be submitted within the timetable indicated under Part I, Section A. Communicators should bid on positions listed in the bi-weekly open assignments telegram list of communications vacancies.

-- Untenured Junior and Mid-Level Officers. Untenured Junior and Mid-Level Officers reviewing onward assignment possibilities should pay particular attention to the need for language training if they are on language probation. In general, they may only receive a maximum of 24 weeks of language training prior to being tenured. Untenured officers interested in 44 weeks' language training in Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean or Russian should consult their CDO's. All Junior officers should also bear in mind that they will be expected to serve at least a year (10-14 months) in Consular work as well as at least one additional year in their own cone, as required under the Career Candidate Program. Untenured officers will not be assigned to details.

-- Career Mobility. The Functional Specialization Program provides an opportunity for employees to redirect their careers. It is centered currently on training in the Administrative subfunctions: Personnel, Budget and General Services. The program is announced once a year and is open for applications at that time (see 88 State 035874). The revised Mustang Program was announced in July 1986 (see 86 State 234513) and is open for application all year. Information on these and other programs may be found in the Career Mobility Handbook which is available overseas in the administrative offices of embassies and consulates and in the Department through each bureau's executive office. The Career Mobility staff is located in Room 2813 (Main State), and their telephone number is 647-7306.

-- State/AID Personnel Staffing Exchange. In implementation of the 1979 State/AID agreement on personnel staffing and exchanges, qualified AID officers will be permitted to submit bids on any administrative position where there is an AID presence. AID officers will submit their bids directly to AID Personnel (M/PM/FSP) in Washington. AID Personnel will transmit them to State Personnel. Although AID Personnel will see that AID employees receive a list of appropriate vacancies, State administrative officers in the field should make the administrative vacancy list available to AID officers at post upon request. The State Department tour-of-duty will apply to the assignment.

-- Medical Examinations. To avoid broken assignments and to reduce the number of emergency vacancies, physical examinations for medical clearance purposes should be performed early. Normally, a medical clearance is valid for two years. The results of the physical examination should be submitted to M/MED/Clearances for evaluation 60-90 days before your departure from post. It is not necessary for employees or dependents to have orders or an assignment to obtain the examination. If you elect to have your examination on home leave, or if the Regional Medical Officer (RMO) or MED recommends that it be performed in the U.S., the examination must be scheduled as early as possible so the clearance can be completed prior to your departure for post. If you have questions about the adequacy of facilities at your post to perform these examinations, please consult your RMO. You should advise your CDO if you are unable to complete your examination before your transfer date. Please also inform your CDO of any medical problem you or your dependents may have which could affect your worldwide availability. If you are assigned to long-term language training, arrange to have your medical examination immediately after you have been officially notified of the assignment and report the results as soon as possible. Medical disqualification occurring at or near the end of training means considerable wasted time for the officer, a financial loss for the Department and a major problem in filling the onward vacancy. In addition, you should remember that regulations provide that the Department may withhold certain medical benefits from those personnel who proceed to a foreign posting without proper medical clearances for themselves or their dependents.

-- Domestic Assignments. Under the Foreign Service Act of 1980, all U.S. citizen members of the Career Service should spend a minimum of one tour of duty (at least two years) in the United States during each fifteen years of service. Exceptions to this provision will be based on the needs of the Service. Any continuous period of more than 120 days is counted towards domestic service.

-- Five-Year Rule. Domestic tours of duty for Foreign Service employees are limited to five years by Department regulations. Departmental assignments are normally for a period of four years or two two-year assignments. However, the regulations provide for an additional year in the United States to allow for extensions or training or detail assignments. Employees who have been assigned to the United States since 1984 or earlier will be expected to bid on overseas assignments. Extensions beyond five years in the United States may be granted only under certain exceptional criteria outlined in the Department Notice of August 19, 1985 and require the approval of the Director General. Extensions beyond eight years in the U.S. require the approval of the Under Secretary for Management. Employees seeking such extensions should be in touch with their Career Development Officer.

-- Leave Without Pay. Requests for Leave Without Pay (LWOP) are considered on a case-by-case basis. For such a request to be granted, the conditions stated in 3 FAM 471.4 and 471.5 must be met. To the extent possible, LWOP requests therefore should be timed to coincide with the employee's normal transfer date and should be submitted to PER before an onward assignment has been made. LWOP policy for tandem couples is significantly different from the regulations cited above, and tandem employees should consult the Department Notice of August 14, 1987, or 1987 State 251964 for more complete information. Since time spent on LWOP counts against the period during which employee must qualify for tenure, untenured employees are rarely granted LWOP.

-- Primary Skill Code Changes. Applicants for primary skill code changes who have not yet fulfilled the eligibility requirement of two and one-half years in a job carrying the new skill code are assured that every effort will be made to give the employee the opportunity to continue service in the new function. In cases where an extension or second tour is not immediately possible, the employee in question would be given an opportunity for an additional tour at the earliest possible time within the normal assignment process.

Part IV: BID FORMAT

-- The 1989 bid format provides for computerized registration of your bids. It requires your closest attention: only the prescribed format can be used or your bids will not be recorded. An incorrect "start" line or "stop" line, for example, will cause the computer to reject the entire bid list. An incorrect bid line -- for example, if either organization code or position number is incorrect -- will cause the computer to reject that bid.

The basic format is the same whether bids are submitted from the field or from the Department. Bid cables from the field should be addressed for action both to SECSTATE WASHDC and to USOFFICE FADPC WASHDC. If you leave off the SECSTATE address, the cable will not reach your counselor. If you leave off the FADPC address, the bids will not enter the computer.

If you are assigned in the Department, you should submit your bid list on a cable form (OF-185) typed with an OCR element, as you would for any outgoing cable. The only action addressee on your cable should be PERSONNEL STATE DEPARTMENT. (Note: This address is only for use by bidders currently on Departmental assignments.) Submit all other information exactly as if you were sending a cable from the field, i.e., including TAGS, E.O. 12356, SUBJECT, PER CHANNEL, etc. This "cable" should show you as the drafter, and your counselor as approving officer. It should be submitted to your counselor, who will check the format and forward it to OC/T for entry into the computer.

If you are on a detail or Pearson assignment, or for any other reason do not have access to cable forms or OCR elements, you should submit your bid list in writing to your counselor, who will see that it is entered into the computer.

Those bidding from overseas should follow instructions below carefully and to the letter:

A. Bid cables should be sent PER Channel. They must be unclassified.

B. The TAGS line on all submissions should be APER.

C. The SUBJECT line should be: "Bid list for onward assignment," followed by your name (last name first), social security number, grade, and skill code. The following is a complete list of all personal Foreign Service Skill codes:

- 0020 Executive (Career)
- 0055 Program Direction
- 2010 Administrative Management
- 3001 Consular Affairs
- 5015 Economics
- 5025 Finance and Economic Development
- 5505 Political Affairs
- 5520 Political/Military Affairs
- 5535 Labor Affairs
- 6020 Science and Technology
- 2070 Inspection (Audit Qualified)
- 2101 Financial Management
- 2201 Personnel Management
- 2301 General Services
- 2340 Building and Maintenance
- 2420 Communications Specialist - Operational
- 2442 Communications Specialist - Technical
- 2580 Diplomatic Courier
- 2501 Security
- 2550 Security Engineering
- 6070 Narcotics Control
- 6110 Medicine
- 6115 Nursing
- 6125 Psychiatry
- 6145 Medical Technology
- 6218 Construction Engineering
- 9015 Secretarial

D. Identifying data. The first line of your message is the "key" line for computer bid registration purposes. It is essential that it be completed properly. An error in this line will cause the computer to reject the entire bid list. The line must start with an ampersand (&) followed immediately by the word START. Then comes a virgule (/) followed immediately by the capital letters BB (to indicate a bid book message). This is followed immediately by another virgule (/) and the employee's social security number (without spaces). This is immediately followed by a virgule (/) and the employee's last name, first name and middle initial, separated by virgules. A semicolon must then be added to complete the first line. A sample first line would be:

&START/BB/277403229/ROE/RICHARD/A;

Please note that this is one continuous line beginning at the left margin. There can be NO spaces in the "start" line.

E. Individual bids. Your bids must be provided in a similar fashion, as follows:

-- Individual bids must be on a separate and distinct line. Do not double space these lines.

-- Each bid line must start with an ampersand (&) and must end with a semicolon (;). Failure to include the semicolon will cause the computer to reject all subsequent bids. The bid line must provide the following information, separated only by a virgule (/), in one continuous line:

Line Number. This is a consecutive number, starting at one "1" and incrementing for each bid line. Thus if you have ten bids the first line will be numbered "1" and the last bid will be numbered "10".

Name of post or organization/organization code/title of position sought/position number/last name of incumbent/transfer eligibility date/preference level (e.g. H, M, or L; preference level must be included for the computer to register the bid).

-- Important: Do not use virgules (/) in organization unit names. For example, a bid on EUR/SOV or AF/EX should read EURSOV, AFEX. Do not use virgules in the TED: i.e. 889, not 8/89.

Sample bid lines would be:

&1/NIAMEY/316209/GSO/20109/JONES/789/H;
&2/NEAEX/140200/ADMINOFF/S4737200/SMITH/789/M;
&3/SS-S/010621/STAFFOFF-OPERATIONS/S4062401/GREEN/889/H;

-- Do not use ampersands except at the start of the bid line. As appropriate, use "BF" not "B&F" or "CP" not "C&R."

-- After the final bid line, a separate "stop line" must be added. It consists of an ampersand (&) followed immediately by the word STOP followed by a virgule (/) the letters BB followed by another virgule (/) the social security number and a virgule (/) followed by a number denoting the total number of lines between the Start and Stop lines. This is followed by the date the telegram was sent and a semicolon to end the line. Example:
&STOP/BB/999999999/8/NOV-15-88;

NOTE: Do not place line numbers at the beginning of start or stop lines. The line numbers are only for individual bid lines or the tandem status line. Failure to include the stop line will cause the computer to reject the entire bid list. Use dashes rather than virgules or spaces to separate the elements of the date in the stop line.

-- In the final paragraph of the bid telegram each employee should inform his/her CDO of the category of the most recent medical clearance (e.g., category 1 - Cleared for worldwide duty) of the employee and all dependents who will accompany the employee to post and the effective dates of the medical clearances.

F. Training and Detail Assignments. Information on long-term training and detail assignments will be provided in separate announcements. These announcements will also provide precise guidance on how to bid on training and detail assignments using the above format.

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A sample bid cable follows for overseas bidders:

UNCLASSIFIED

SECSTATE WASHDC
USOFFICE FADPC WASHDC

PER CHANNEL

E.O. 12356 N/A

TAGS: APER

SUBJECT: BID LIST FOR ONWARD ASSIGNMENT -- DOE, JANE F.,
SSAN: 999-99-9999, FS-1, 2010

&START/BB/999999999/DOE/JANE/F;
&1/FRANKFURT/324005/ADMINOFF/50203/DAY/689/H;
&2/NOUAKCHOTT/355702/ADMINOFF/51014/BLACK/689/H;
&3/MOSCOW/328401/BF/53078/WHITE/789/H;
&4/SSEX/010630/BUDGET/S4413300/BAKER/889/M;
&5/FSISPS/260300/ADMINOFF/S4991400/SMITH/989/M;
&6/TRAINING/261100/UTMGMT/S0000000/VACANT/000/H;
&7/LONDON/323201/BUDGET/50063/NEW/989/L;
&STOP/BB/999999999/7/NOV-15-88;

(End of message code)

A sample bid list follows for Department bidders. Please note that bid list should be prepared on a regular telegram form and typed with OCR typing element.

UNCLASSIFIED

ROUTINE PERSONNEL STATE DEPARTMENT

PER CHANNEL

E.O. 12356 N/A

TAGS: APER

SUBJECT: BID LIST FOR ONWARD ASSIGNMENT -- DOE, JANE F.,
SSAN: 999-99-9999, FS-1, 2010

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&START/BB/999999999/DOE/JANE/F;
 &1/FRANKFURT/324005/ADMINOFF/50203/DAY/689/H;
 &2/NOUAKCHOTT/355702/ADMINOFF/51014/BLACK/689/H;
 &3/MOSCOW/328401/BF/53078/WHITE/789/H;
 &4/SSEX/010630/BUDGET/S4413300/BAKER/889/M;
 &5/FSISPS/260300/ADMINOFF/S4991400/SMITH/989/M;
 &6/TRAINING/261100/UTMGMT/S0000000/VACANT/000/H;
 &7/LONDON/323201/BUDGET/50063/NEW/989/L;
 &STOP/BB/999999999/7/NOV-15-88;

(End-of-message indicator)

The following is the format of the tandem status entry line, to be used by both overseas and Department bidders seeking either tandem assignment consideration or a change from tandem to non-tandem status.

This status line, after the line number, must begin with the word "TANDEM". It is to be followed by the appropriate status code, chosen from among the following selections:

Code	Status
X	Non-tandem
C	Tandem - both State employees
U	" - USIA spouse
A	" - AID spouse
G	" - Commerce spouse
R	" - Agriculture spouse

After any of the codes C through R, provide information identifying your spouse as shown below. However, no further information is required after an entry of code X (non-tandem). End the line with a semicolon.

-- For Tandem Consideration:

&LINE NUMBER/TANDEM/U/999999999/LASTNAME/FIRSTNAME/MI;

-- For Change to Non-Tandem Status:

&LINE NUMBER/TANDEM/X;

A sample telegram for Overseas Tandem bidders is as follows:

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For tandem bidders the last three lines of the previous sample cable would be as follows:

&7/LONDON/323201/BUDGET/50063/NEW/989/L;
&8/TANDEM/U/11111111/ROE/RICHARD/A;
&STOP/BB/999999999/8/NOV-15-88;

(End of message code)

-- This message was submitted to the American Foreign Service Association (AFSA) for negotiation under Chapter 10 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980. AFSA has agreed to its contents which represents the complete agreement between AFSA and the State Department.

-- Posts are reminded that correspondence between employees and their personnel counselors is to be treated as privileged communication. For example, handling and distribution of bid telegrams should be limited to American personnel with a need to know.

-- Minimize considered.==